Gifted Education Resource Guide

Montana
Office of Public Instruction
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Foreword

This publication has been prepared to assist districts in developing and implementing effective programs for gifted and talented students as required by accreditation standard 10.55.804 (Appendix A). This office, along with the Montana Gifted Education Advisory board and the publication's principal author, Sue Kidd, are providing Montana educators with a series of research-based, best practice publications.

As we seek to improve educational practices in our schools, we must not only raise the base level of expectations for all, but also expand at the top to allow capable students to go beyond and reach their potential. This series of publications will assist districts in raising the "ceiling as well as the floor."

The program for the gifted and talented should reinforce and be compatible with other programs within the same institution.
—Sandra N. Kaplan, Providing Programs for the Gifted and Talented. 1974, Ventura, Ca., Leadership Training Institute.

Prologue

Educators are now rethinking and redesigning our educational systems. There are advocates for Outcome-Based Education, Total Quality Management in Education, Site-Based Management, Heterogeneous Grouping, Authentic Assessment, Cooperative Learning, and Distance Learning. Each of these ideas give us new insights into the educational process. Some of them have real merit, others may be just tinkering with the system. We must remember our mission: to educate our children. It is time to review our basic philosophy and to use sound principles of learning to redesign systems and address student needs.

Developers of programs for high-ability learners must remember that our programs are part of the total educational system. We must be willing to sit down at the table with our fellow citizens to develop the plan to educate our students—all of our students. We must be willing to fight for the programs and services that can be demonstrated to work for our high ability learners and to let go of those that do not.

In our quest to develop programs where high-ability students can be challenged to reach their potential, it is appropriate to consider the derivation of the word "intelligence" and to measure our programs against it.

"Intelligence is derived from two words—inter and legere—inter meaning 'between' and legere meaning 'to choose.' An intelligent person, therefore, is one who has learned 'to choose between.' He knows that good is better than evil, that confidence should supersede fear, that love is superior to hate, that gentleness is better than cruelty, forbearance than intolerance, compassion than arrogance, and that truth has more virtue than ignorance."

—J. Martin Klotsche

Reform: Like trying to repair an airplane in full flight with all of us aboard.
—Eve. M Bither, Director Programs for the Improvement of Practice. U. S. Dept. of Education

Providing a quality education to meet the needs of all our children is an exemplary goal of the community, the state, and the nation. This manual is an attempt to bring the latest thinking and research in educational programming to help you and your community design or renew your program. This manual focuses on the particular needs of the high-ability student (in some areas called the Gifted/Talented student) but with the view that the programming for these students is only a part of the continuum of educational possibilities for all students.

We are also aware that communities differ in some ways but also share many similarities. This manual is designed to guide all types of communities, whether they are small or large, rural, urban or suburban. The focus of this manual is on developing a program to meet the needs of high-ability learners from kindergarten through high school graduation.

Who should be part of the process of developing a program?

What part should or could they play?

Providing a quality education to meet the needs of all our children is an exemplary goal of the community, the state, and the nation.

1. **District Commitment:** the district commits to developing and implementing program.

   √ MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES: *TMMMA*

   It is essential that you review the necessary elements needed for program success. They are:

   Time— To develop, implement, inservice, and assess.

   Money— For staff, staff development and materials.

   Manpower— To develop, implement, and carry out programming.

   Management— Skills and staff to manage programming.

   Authority— To develop, implement, and carry out programming.

All successful programs must consider these factors. You may need to be creative, but you must make provisions for each of them.

2. **The Steering Committee:** an ongoing committee whose major functions are to oversee the development and function of the district program and to advocate for the program (approximately 10-15 interested people).

   √ Consists of a broad base of community members, each representative of a portion of the community and the school district's resources and

interests.

Included might be:

- classroom teachers representing each of the levels in the district
- administrators
- school psychologists
- counselors or social service representatives
- parents
- school board representative
- gifted student advocates
- business and/or professional representative (could be through the local Chamber of Commerce)
- civic representative (could be from a local service club)
- students (male and female, middle and/or high school)
- teachers with an interest/training in gifted education

This is the objective of the whole enterprise: to design a program that will successfully address the issues that created a need for it in the first place.
—Borland, James H., 1989, p.49

√ Responsibilities of the steering committee

- become knowledgeable of the needs of high-ability students and best practices in their education
- write the program philosophy statement
- set program goals
- oversee, monitor and validate the work of the planning committee
- develop a time line for program development, implementation, and evaluation
- act as an advocate in the community

3. **Planning Committee:** a short-term committe whose task is to develop the district's program. The committee may be made up of members of the Steering Committee and/or other interested individuals.

√ Responsibilities of the committee:

- complete a needs assessment
  What do we have? What do we need?
- define the population to be served
- devise the identification process
- develop the program options and levels of service
- provide for inservice training on:
  —characteristics and identification of high-ability students
  —current best practices

—curriculum differentiation
- program options and levels of service
- design and conduct the program assessment and renewal
- act as advocates in the school and community

The first task of the planning committee is to conduct the needs assessment. This is an assessment of the programming options that are available and appropriate in the present system, perceived program needs of the district and perceptions about gifted students. The needs assessment should address the following topics:

Issues related to those who are the gifted. For example:

√ Can gifted students be gifted in only one subject area or is the perception that gifted students are gifted in all areas?

√ What percentage of the school population should be identified as gifted?

√ Should gifted education include the art and music areas or is it limited to academics?

The first task of the planning committee is to conduct the needs assessment.

Issues related to programming for the gifted.

√ How can the program facilitate students progressing through the curriculum at a faster rate?

√ How can the program facilitate independent learning and mentorships?

√ How should highly creative students be accommodated by the program?

√ How should non-motivated, high-potential students be accommodated in the program?

√ What are the responsibilities of teachers who work with gifted students?

Issues about current school programing.

Does the present educational program provide:

√ a strong general curriculum to establish a foundation upon which excellence can be built

√ appropriate academic pacing (flexible pacing including acceleration)

√ opportunities to develop in-depth studies

√ experiences in critical and creative thinking, problem solving and decision making

√ opportunities to recognize and develop relationships among various disciplines

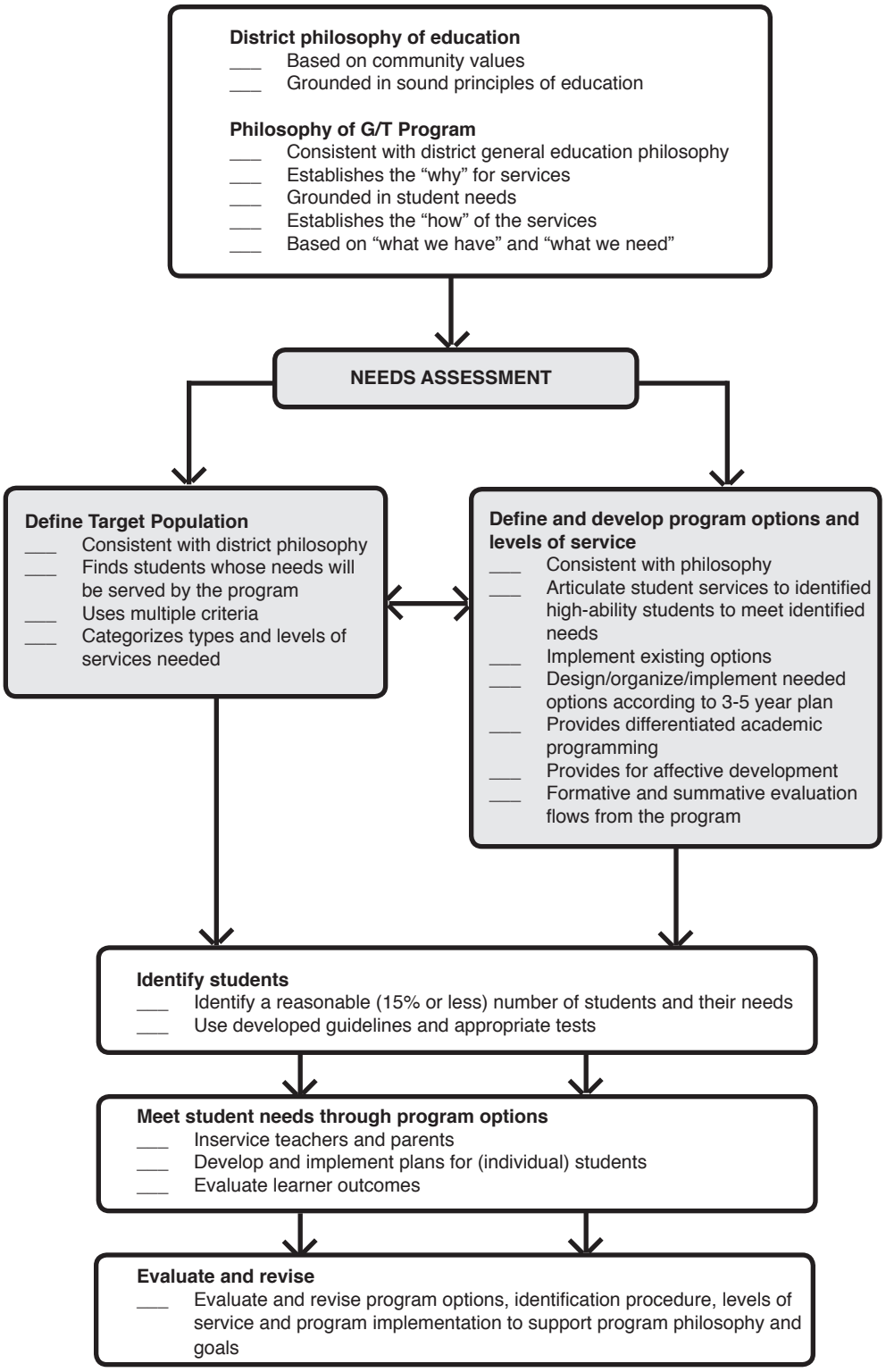
- √ opportunities to relate to, and interact with, other high-ability students
- √ appropriate counseling services (personal, college, and career)
- √ opportunities to develop independence, self-direction and discipline in learning

Issues related to current services should be addressed if a district program currently exists and is being renewed through this process.

- √ How challenging is the course work in the current program?
- √ How challenging is the course work in the general school program?

Questionnaires should be developed and distributed to parents of currently identified gifted students, parents of prior identified gifted students, parents of high ability but not yet identified students, identified gifted students, students enrolled in honors or higher-level high school classes, all administrators, randomly selected teachers K-12, all counselors, psychologists and other interested community members. This information provides the basis around which programming for high-ability students will be developed. (See Appendix B for an example of a needs assessment from Great Falls Public Schools.)

The Flow Chart on the following page can help give direction to your program development.



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Flow Chart Checklist for Program Development

In this chapter, we are developing an administrative response to the needs of high-ability students. Our best programs will be rooted in theory but designed to meet the specific needs of our high-ability students in our individual districts. We might think of the theoretical model as a ball sitting on a shelf. It is obviously a ball but it doesn't *do* anything. The ball becomes the administrative model when it is used in a real game and bounces, scores points and really *does* something.

A Brief Look at Theory

Exemplary educational systems are always grounded in sound principles; however, there is always a need for **RE**vision, **RE**newal, and **RE**formation in the administration of our educational programs to **RE**align our programs with our chosen principles.

Perhaps the best framework of "learner-centered principles" is a collaboration between the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL). This new publication (1993) is an extensive project developed and reviewed by the top psychologists, educators, professionals in various scientific disciples, and also a wide range of professional groups. These principles can act as guidelines for educational reform and school redesign.

What are these sound principles of education?

Metacognitive and Cognitive Factors

Principle 1: *The nature of the learning process.* Learning is a natural process of pursuing personally meaningful goals, and it is active, volitional, and internally mediated; it is a process of discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through the learner's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

Principle 2: *Goals of the learning process.* The learner seeks to create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge regardless of the quantity and quality of data available.

Principle 3: *The construction of knowledge.* The learner links new information with existing and future-oriented knowledge in uniquely meaningful ways.

Principle 4: *Higher-order thinking.* Higher-order strategies for "thinking about thinking"—for overseeing and monitoring mental operations—facilitate creative and critical thinking and the development of expertise.

Affective Factors

Principle 5: *Motivational influences on learning.* The depth and breadth of information processed and what and how much is learned and remembered are influenced by (a)self-awareness and beliefs about personal control, competence, and ability; (b) clarity and saliency of personal values, interests, and goals; (c) personal expectations for success or failure; (d) affect, emotion, and general state of mind; and (e) the resulting motivation to learn.

Principle 6: *Intrinsic motivation to learn.* Individuals are naturally curious and enjoy learning, but intense negative cognitions and emotions (e.g., feeling insecure, worrying about failure, being self-conscious or shy, and fearing corporal punishment, ridicule, or stigmatizing labels) thwart this enthusiasm.

Principle 7: *Characteristics of motivation-enhancing learning tasks.* Curiosity, creativity, and higher-order thinking are stimulated by relevant, authentic learning tasks of optimal difficulty and novelty for each student.

Developmental Factors

Principle 8: *Developmental constraints and opportunities.* Individuals progress through stages of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development that are a function of unique genetic and environmental factors.

Personal and Social Factors

Principle 9: *Social and cultural diversity.* Learning is facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in flexible, diverse (in age, culture, family background, etc.), and adaptive instructional settings.

Principle 10: *Social acceptance, self-esteem, and learning.* Learning and self-esteem are heightened when individuals are in respectful and caring relationships with others who see their potential, genuinely appreciate their unique talents. and accept them as individuals.

Individual Differences

Principle 11: *Individual differences in learning.* Although basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners (regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, physical ability, religion, or socioeconomic status), learners have different capabilities and preferences for learning mode and strategies. These differences are a function of environment (what is learned and communicated in different cultures or other social groups) and heredity (what occurs naturally as a function of genes).

Exemplary educational systems are always grounded in sound principles; however, there is always a need for REvision, REnewal, and REformation in the administration of our educational programs to REalign our programs with our chosen principles.

Principle 12: *Cognitive filters.* Personal beliefs, thoughts, and understandings resulting from prior learning and interpretations become the individual's basis for constructing reality and interpreting life experiences.

—Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, January 1993

These principles have direct implications to the programs we design for our students. Many current programs for high-ability students are rooted in these principles and have proven their worth. It is vital that we keep them in mind as we develop, REdesign and REnew our programs.

Exemplary educational systems are always grounded in sound principles; however, there is always a need for re/vision, re/newal, and re/formation in the administration of our educational programs to re/align our programs with our chosen principles.

For further information on program development:

Borland, James H.; Planning and Implementing Programs for the Gifted, Teachers College Press, 1989

Davis, Gary A. and Sylvia B. Rimm; Education of the Gifted and Talented; second edition, Prentice Hall; 1989

Feldhusen, John F., Steven M. Moover and Michael F. Sayler; Identifying and Educating Gifted Students at the Secondary Level; Trillium Press, 1990

Long, Margo; Rural Programs for Gifted and Talented Students; Whitworth College, Center for Gifted Education, Spokane, Washington

The Curriculum Process Guide, Montana Office of Public Instruction, Jan Cladouhos Hahn, 1990

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION means you look at whether, in the end, your project did what you set out to do.

SUMMARY

In summary, the grantor wants to know how effective the project is likely to be. The grantor can estimate the value of the project if:

- it is designed to meet a need or solve a problem,
- the technique used has a good chance of bringing about the desired change,
- the quality and quantity of the change can be measured, and
- the results can be documented.